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ABSTRACT

This research project studies the reading interests of junior high school students in a city school in the metropolitan Atlanta area. Four hundred and fifty students--representative of the school population according to grade level, race, sex, and scholastic standing--were given a questionnaire reflecting their reading interests and habits. Responses were weighted to determine preference more exactly. Data from the questionnaire were put on punched cards and fed into an IBM 7094 computer. Some overall conclusions are: Mystery-detective stories seem to be favorites at all levels; Boys and girls differ generally in their first choice of reading interests; White and Black students agree on mystery-detective stories as first choices and generally agree in the next four or five areas of interest; Above-average and average students agree on mystery-detective stories as their first choice, while below-average students favor sports stories; The primary factors influencing students to read are magazines and television movies and programs; Stories of a contemporary nature are favorites among all groups; In general, junior high students read what is currently of interest, with a base of some classical authors. A bibliography, a flow-chart of procedures, and a copy of the questionnaire are included. (Author/SJ)

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READING INTERESTS

OF

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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RESEARCH PROJECT

FOR

ELE 965

* * * *

Submitted to

Dr. Ruth White

by

Henry J. Goetze

on

May 12, 1972

* * * *

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LI 004 348

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The reading interests of students has always been of particular concern to school librarians. This particular research project focuses on the reading interests of junior high school students, specifically the students at Marietta Junior High School in Marietta, Georgia. Some of the questions that this project will seek to answer are the following:

1. Is there a difference between the reading interests of sixth graders, seventh graders and eighth graders?

2. Do reading interests of junior high boys differ from those of junior high girls?

3. Do reading interests of junior high white students differ from those of junior high black students?

4. Is there a difference in the reading interests of A-B students, C-D students, and E students (above average, average, and below average students)?

5. What are some of the factors that influence junior high school students to read?

6. What do junior high students want to read about most?

7. What do junior high students like to read about most?

8. How much time do junior high students spend in reading for class assignments and reading for personal enjoyment?

9. What are some of the favorite titles and authors of junior high students?

The reason for this study is to help determine the types of books that junior high school students read. Specific titles of books will be listed, but we will be concerned more with the contents of books. We hope that this study will help librarians in the selection of books that satisfy the needs of students and contribute to the educational growth and personal development of junior high school students.

A survey of the literature concerning the reading interests of students covers the period from 1930 to the present. The studies range from short periods of time to long periods of time, from limited generalizability to

extensive application, and from around grade five to grade twelve, with most studies being made in the grade six to nine range. In the area of reading interests of students, Colburn (1930) and Rankin (1944) established such basic themes as adventure, mystery, romance, sports and animal stories, and science and invention stories as being popular with students. Witty (1961), Vaughan (1963), King (1967), and Jungeblut (1965) reiterate these basic themes in their studies, with science fiction appearing more often as a favorite subject of stories. Later studies by Lapides (1971) and Wilson (1971) indicate a growth of interest in books dealing with contemporary life: drug addiction, crime, Vietnam, Negro problems. In the area of reading interests of boys and girls, Colburn (1930) and Rankin (1944), through Norvell (1950) to Vaughan (1963) and Pilgrim (1968), seem to have arrived at the same opinion that girls read more than boys and that the reading interests of boys and girls differ significantly. Intelligence as a factor in reading interest was studied by Rankin (1944), Pilgrim (1968) and King (1967) who arrived at similar conclusions: the slow and the bright students have similar reading interests, but differ only in quantity and rate of reading. However, Norvell (1950) indicated in his study that there is a decided difference in the reading interests of bright and slow children. Studies of factors that influence students to read, made by Witty (1961), Jones (1965), King (1967) and Pilgrim (1968), revealed that television, radio and movies rated high among students. As far as lists of favorite titles and authors is concerned, studies made by Rankin (1944), Colburn (1930), Norvell (1950), Moses (1962), Leng (1968), Wilson (1970) and Lapides (1971) indicate a basic change in particular titles, with a few classic authors, such as Twain, Alcott, Dickens, and Stevenson, appearing on most lists. It seems that what is currently popular makes the reading lists of students. Of this, Lapides says, "The free reading of students reflects

that of the society of which they are a part."[1] Little has been done surveying the reading interests of black students or the influence of favorite school subjects on reading interests. The general conclusion arrived at from this survey of the literature indicates that basic interests and differences remain about the same, while individual titles and authors vary with the times.

The results of this study may serve the following purposes:

1. Aid librarians in book selection.
2. Help in the preparation of reading lists.
3. Determine types of stories and characteristics of stories that interest junior high school students.
4. Furnish teachers with information on subjects (topics) that currently are of interest to junior high students.

Many objectives could be set concerning this project, but the following will apply directly to this study:

1. To determine the reading interests of sixth graders, seventh graders, and eighth graders.
2. To determine the reading interests of junior high boys and girls.
3. To determine the reading interests of junior high white and black students.
4. To determine the reading interests of above average, average, and below average students.
5. To determine what influences junior high students to read.
6. To determine if there is a relationship between the favorite school subjects of junior high students and their reading interests.

Data for the fifth objective will be made according to grade levels, sex, race, and grade average. Besides the above objectives, the following will also constitute a part of this study:

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[1] Linda Lapides. "A Decade of teen-age reading in Baltimore, 1960-1970." Top of the News, April, 1971, p. 289.

1. To determine the amount of time spent by junior high students reading for class assignments and reading for pleasure.

2. To determine junior high students' preference of the sex of characters in books.

3. To tabulate the preferences of junior high students concerning the characteristics of books that appeal to them.

4. To determine which of the following topics junior high students want to read about the most: crime, drug addiction, sexy stories, broken homes, early marriages, stories about Negroes, Vietnam, sports.

5. To determine which of the following factors help junior high students decide to read: interest in the subject, liked other books by the same author, recommendation by another person.

6. To determine what junior high students like to read about.

7. To obtain a list of titles and authors of books that are currently of interest to junior high students.

In this study, junior high school students refers to students in grades six, seven, and eight; A-B students refers to students with a scholastic average between 85 and 100; C-D students, between 60 and 85; and E students, below 60. Reading interests refers to types of stories and books that appeal to junior high school students.

The target population for this study is the 1300 students at Marietta Junior High School, with approximately the following percentages: 50% boys, 50% girls; 70% white, 30% black; 40-60% A-B students, 30-50% C-D students, 10-15% E students. The variation in percentages for grade average is due to the changes in averages from quarter to quarter, and to the difficulty for students to determine the specific group in which their grades fit.

The sample consists of fifty students from each grade level. The sample responses were determined as follows:

Sixth grade: Two classes were randomly selected, each with approximately twenty-five to thirty students. From all the responses, fifty were selected

to establish representativeness of the group for sex, race, and grade average. This is a type of stratified sampling.

Seventh and eighth grades: In each grade level, there was a selection of class "blocks" which had a representative grouping of students by sex, race, and grade average. Then there was a random selection of one of these "blocks" for each grade level. Finally, from approximately sixty responses from each grade level there was a selection of fifty responses to further establish representativeness of the groups.

Although variables as such do not apply to this type of survey, yet the following can arbitrarily be established: the dependent variables are the factors being surveyed for, such as reading interests, time spent reading for assignments and enjoyment, what students want to read about, what helps them decide to read, etc. The independent variables are grade level, sex, race, and grade average.

To determine the reading interests and other information, a questionnaire was administered to the sample. Some ideas for this questionnaire were taken from one used in a survey by Martin (1963). A copy of this questionnaire appears on p. 30-32. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were established mainly by two pilot studies, each involving the administration of the questionnaire to three students from each grade level. Further testing of the questionnaire was effected by the judgment of two teachers from each grade level, and the suggestions of two instructors at the University of Georgia serving as advisors for this project.

The first step in the procedure for this survey was to obtain permission from school authorities to conduct the survey. Then the grades were selected as the sample population, trying to keep the same representativeness in the sample population as the percentages in the target population. The two pilot

studies were then made and any revision of the questionnaire attended to. The questionnaire was then given to the classes selected. The researcher administered all questionnaires, with teacher assistance, and gave all directions needed. Little explanation was given concerning definitions of any terms; little was asked by students. The researcher and teacher circulated around the classroom to be sure numbers were put for preferences, not merely checks. In a few cases, with E students, oral questioning and help were given to complete the questionnaire properly. In this type of procedure, 100% response was anticipated and obtained. The information was then keypunched on punch cards. Numbers on the questionnaire indicate "fields" on the card for various items of information. The cards were then fed into an IBM 7094 computer to produce print-outs of desired information. The print-outs included the following:

1. Reading interests of:
   a) boys
   b) girls
   c) 6th graders
   d) 7th graders
   e) 8th graders
   f) all black students
   g) all white students
   h) A-B students
   i) C-D students
   j) E students

2. What junior high students want to read about:
   - same categories as # 1.

3. Favorite school subjects of junior high students:
   - only by grade levels.

4. Time spent reading for class assignments:
   - same categories as # 1.

5. Time spent reading for personal enjoyment:
   - same as # 1.

6. Choice of sex of characters in books:
   - same as # 1.

7. Characteristics of books liked by students:
   - same as # 1.

8. What makes students want to read:
   - same as # 1.

9. What helps students decide to read:
   - same as # 1.

Listing of favorite titles and authors was done manually, since there was such a variation in choices. Data on the punched cards were run on the BMD (Biomedical) Program on the IBM 7094, which produced about 15,000 lines of print-out. Relevant data were then collated and adjusted for interpretation. A flowchart of these procedures can be found on p. 28-29.

Since the BMD program used for this survey also produced information not particularly relevant to this study, it was necessary to select the pertinent data, transfer the data to a prepared form and then tabulate the results in a manner suitable for the framework of this survey. In all cases where preferences or choices were made, a weighted form was used to help decide the final order of preference. The weights used were as follows:

Method I	Method II	Method III
1st choice - 5 2nd choice - 4 3rd choice - 3 4th choice - 2 5th choice - 1	1st choice - 3 2nd choice - 2 3rd choice - 1	1st choice - 2 2nd choice - 1

Method I was used for Table C: Kinds of books junior high school students like to read.

Method II was used for the following tables:

Table E: What junior high students want to read about.

Table G: Characteristics of stories liked by junior high students.

Table I: What junior high students like to read about.

Method III was used for Table J: Favorite subjects.

All tables indicate order of preferences. For Tables C, E, G, I, and J, numbers following each factor indicate the weighted count for that factor. All other tables indicate the number of students selecting the particular factor. If total numbers for any particular response do not add up to the number in Table AA, it is due to the fact that some students did not answer that particular question. Table AA indicates the number of responses by grade, sex, race, and grade average.

TABLE AA

Responses to questionnaire

	6th	7th	8th	Totals
Boys	25	23	26	74
Girls	25	27	24	76
White	33	37	36	106
Black	17	13	14	44
A-B	31	34	27	92
C-D	13	12	18	43
E	6	4	5	15

TABLE A

Time spent reading for class assignments

6th	7th	8th	Boys	Girls
0-1 hrs (20)	0-1 hrs (18)	1-2 hrs (19)	1-2 hrs (24)	0-1 hrs (28)
1-2 hrs (13)	1-2 hrs (15)	3-5 hrs (15)	0-1 hrs (23)	1-2 hrs (23)
3-5 hrs (13)	3-5 hrs (15)	0-1 hrs (13)	3-5 hrs (21)	3-5 hrs (22)
6-10 hrs (4)	6-10 hrs (1)	6-10 hrs (2)	6-10 hrs (4)	6-10 hrs (3)
10+ hrs (0)	10+ hrs (1)	10+ hrs (1)	10+ hrs (0)	10+ hrs (2)

White	Black	A-B	C-D	E
1-2 hrs (37)	0-1 hrs (23)	1-2 hrs (30)	0-1 hrs (18)	0-1 hrs (7)
3-5 hrs (33)	1-2 hrs (10)	3-5 hrs (28)	1-2 hrs (13)	1-2 hrs (4)
0-1 hrs (28)	3-5 hrs (10)	0-1 hrs (26)	3-5 hrs (13)	3-5 Hrs (2)
6-10 hrs (7)	10+ hrs (1)	6-10 hrs (6)	6-10 hrs (0)	6-10 hrs (1)
10+ hrs (1)	6-10 hrs (0)	10+ hrs (2)	10+ hrs (0)	10+ hrs (0)

TABLE B

Time spent reading for enjoyment

6th	7th	8th	Boys	Girls
1-2 hrs (15)	1-2 hrs (13)	0-1 hrs (14)	0-1 hrs (25)	1-2 hrs (21)
0-1 hrs (13)	0-1 hrs (13)	1-2 hrs (12)	1-2 hrs (19)	3-5 hrs (21)
3-5 hrs (12)	3-5 hrs (10)	3-5 hrs (10)	3-5 hrs (11)	0-1 hrs (15)
10+ hrs (6)	6-10 hrs (9)	10+ hrs (8)	6-10 hrs (9)	10+ hrs (11)
6-10 hrs (4)	10+ hrs (5)	6-10 hrs (6)	10+ hrs (8)	6-10 hrs (10)

White	Black	A-B	C-D	E
1-2 hrs (33)	0-1 hrs (20)	1-2 hrs (26)	0-1 hrs (17)	0-1 hrs (7)
3-5 hrs (22)	3-5 hrs (10)	3-5 hrs (19)	1-2 hrs (12)	3-5 hrs (3)
0-1 hrs (20)	1-2 hrs (7)	10+ hrs (16)	3-5 hrs (10)	1-2 hrs (2)
6-10 hrs (16)	10+ hrs (4)	0-1 hrs (16)	6-10 hrs (4)	10+ hrs (2)
10+ hrs (15)	6-10 hrs (3)	6-10 hrs (15)	10+ hrs (1)	6-10 Hrs (0)

Conclusions:

1. Tables A and B indicate that junior high school students spend more time reading for enjoyment than they do reading for class assignments.

2. There is little difference in the time spent reading (for class assignments or for enjoyment) between sixth, seventh, and eighth graders, although eighth graders are inclined to read more. Girls tend to read more than boys, whites more than blacks, and the above average and average students more than the below average and average students.

3. For all junior high school students, the average per student is about two hours per week reading for class assignments, and a little more than three hours per week reading for personal enjoyment.

TABLE C

Kinds of books junior high students like to read

6th		7th		8th	
Myst/Det	138	Myst/Det	151	Myst/Det	146
Humor	125	Adventure	116	Adventure	107
Romance	111	Humor	103	Sports	101
Sports	92	Sports	80	Romance	96
Adventure	79	Romance	75	Humor	93
Animal S.	61	Biography	75	Biography	70
Biography	56	Animal S.	59	Sci Fic	58
Sci Fic	50	Sci Fic	53	Animal S	50
Western	42	Western	25	Western	29

Boys		Girls	
Sports	205	Myst/Det	267
Myst/Det	174	Romance	215
Adventure	171	Humor	187
Humor	134	Adventure	149
Biography	96	Biography	103
Sci Fic	91	Animal S.	85
Animal S.	83	Sci Fic	77
Romance	67	Sports	67
Western	64	Western	64

White		Black	
Myst/Det	305	Myst/Det	130
Humor	268	Sports	104
Adventure	229	Romance	96
Romance	171	Adventure	82
Sports	168	Biography	82
Animal S.	142	Humor	63
Biography	135	Sci Fic	48
Sci Fic	120	Animal S	44
Western	67	Western	29

A-B		C-D		E	
Myst/Det	269	Myst/Det	123	Sports	46
Humor	231	Adventure	99	Myst/Det	39
Adventure	189	Sports	87	Adventure	30
Romance	186	Humor	86	Romance	23
Sports	139	Romance	73	Humor	19
Biography	117	Biography	65	Animal S.	18
Sci Fic	108	Sci Fic	49	Biography	17
Animal S.	99	Animal S.	49	Sci Fic	11
Western	40	Western	40	Western	8

SUMMARY

Mystery/Detective	1742
Humorous	1309
Adventure	1256
Romance	1113
Sports	1089
Biography	816
Animal stories	680
Science fiction	665
Westerns	376

Conclusions - Table C:

1. As indicated by Table C, mystery-detective stories are most popular in all grades.

2. Boys and slower students prefer sports stories, with mystery-detective stories running close behind.

3. Humorous stories, adventure, and romance and love stories rank in the first five favorites, after mystery-detective stories.

4. Westerns show a tenacity for least favorite, and science fiction stories proved to be surprisingly low in the ratings.

5. White and black students show no great differences in their reading preferences, with mystery, adventure, romance, and sports listed in the first five choices.

6. Nurses and nursing stories, not listed in any of the choices, might be of significant interest to girls. A check of the daily checkout cards indicates this area as being of interest to many junior high school girls.

7. More conclusions regarding this table are found in the Overall Conclusions on page 23.

It seems, then, that a current favorite story would have a basic mystery and detective plot, with plenty of adventure, some romance, perhaps a bit of humor for comic relief of tension, with the hero (or heroine) being associated with some sporting activity, such as automobile or motorcycle racing, or one of the more conservative sports like swimming, tennis or football.

TABLE D

What influences junior high students to read

6th		7th		8th		Boys		Girls	
Magazines	18	Movies	17	Magazines	16	TV movies	22	Magazines	22
TV programs	15	TV movies	16	Movies	11	Magazines	21	Movies	19
TV movies	5	Magazines	9	TV movies	10	TV programs	15	TV movies	19
Radio prog	1	TV programs	4	TV progr	10	Movies	10	TV prog	17
Movies	1	Radio prog	0	Radio prog	2	Radio prog	2	Radio prog	1

White		Black		A-B		C-D		E	
Magazines	32	TV prog	14	Magazines	29	TV prog	13	TV prog	6
TV movies	27	TV movies	14	TV movies	25	Magazines	12	TV movies	6
Movies	26	Magazines	11	Movies	24	TV movies	10	Magazines	2
TV prog	18	Movies	3	TV prog	13	Movies	5	Movies	0
Radio prog	1	Radio prog	2	Radio prog	0	Radio prog	3	Radio pro	0

SUMMARY

Magazines	172
TV movies	154
TV programs	129
Movies	106
Radio programs	12

This question might have been misleading, since it did not indicate whether the factor of magazines influenced the students to read books or to read magazines. We will assume it was understood to refer to reading books.

Conclusions - Table D:

1. Magazines seem to have the greatest influence on junior high students in encouraging them to read.

2. Television movies and television programs also exert a definite influence in reading incentive, although the actual manner of motivation was not surveyed.

3. Movies and television movies also have a considerable effect on reading motivation in the seventh and eighth grades, but not so in the sixth grade. Perhaps parental regulations regarding television and movies have a bearing on this.

TABLE E

What junior high students want to read about

6th		7th		8th	
Sexy stories	58	Sports	62	Drugs	69
Drugs	47	Sexy stories	61	Sexy stories	63
Sports	46	Crime	44	Crime	48
Early marriages	44	Drugs	43	Sports	40
Crime	41	Early marriages	27	Early marriages	26
Negroes	31	Negroes	24	Vietnam	23
Broken homes	30	Vietnam	23	Broken homes	16
Vietnam	5	Broken homes	21	Negroes	15

Boys		Girls	
Sports	113	Drugs	109
Sexy stories	108	Early marriages	75
Crime	69	Sexy stories	74
Drugs	50	Crime	64
Negroes	35	Broken homes	55
Vietnam	31	Negroes	36
Early marriages	22	Sports	35
Broken homes	8	Vietnam	20

White		Black	
Sexy stories	135	Negroes	64
Drugs	115	Sexy stories	47
Crime	113	Drugs	44
Sports	110	Sports	38
Early marriages	71	Early marriage	26
Broken homes	52	Crime	20
Vietnam	37	Vietnam	14
Negroes	3	Broken homes	11

A-B		C-D		E	
Sexy stories	116	Sexy stories	57	Sports	21
Drugs	99	Drugs	53	Crime	12
Sports	87	Sports	40	Drugs	11
Crime	86	Crime	35	Negroes	11
Early marriages	71	Negroes	34	Sexy stories	9
Broken homes	44	Vietnam	19	Early marriages	8
Vietnam	27	Early marriages	18	Vietnam	7
Negroes	23	Broken homes	14	Broken homes	5

SUMMARY

Sexy stories	728
Drugs	640
Sports	592
Crime	532
Early marriages	388
Negroes	276
Broken homes	246
Vietnam	206

This section shows the greatest variations between groups, with the exception of grade level. The term sexy stories was not explained to any of the groups answering the question and no students asked for any explanation.

Conclusions - Table E:

1. Sixth, seventh and eighth graders selected sexy stories, drug addiction, sports and crime among the first five. The first choices varied for each of the grades, but the difference between the first and second choices was generally small.

2. A large variation existed in the preferences of boys and girls. Boys naturally are more interested in sports than are girls who rated sports stories quite low, but rated drugs and drug addiction as their first choice.

3. The difference in first choices of white and black students was expected, with white students showing little interest in stories about Negroes, while black students rated stories about Negroes first. However, both white and black students generally agree on their interests in sexy stories, drug addiction, crime, and sports stories.

4. The above average and average students agree right down the line up to the fifth choice in their interests, while the slower students agree generally with them, but rate sexy stories fifth and show a predominant interest in sports stories.

A Baltimore reporter wrote, in 1970, "This year, you've got to be young, or in love, or black, to appeal to teenagers."[2] We might, by implication, assume that being young and in love applies to interest in sexy stories, in the drug scene, and in sporting activities. If this assumption is correct, then the Baltimore reporter's statement would also apply now, to junior high school students.

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[2] Lapides. op cit., p. 290.

TABLE F

What helps junior high students decide to read

6th	7th	8th	Boys	Girls
Interest in subject 22	Interest in subject 28	Interest in subject 31	Interest in subject 47	Interest in subject 40
Recom. by another 13	Know author 11	Recom. by another 10	Recom. by another 13	Recom. by another 19
Know author 8	Recom. by another 9	Know author 8	Know author 11	Know author 16

White	Black	A-B	C-D	E
Interest in subject 59	Interest in subject 28	Interest in subject 52	Interest in subject 24	Interest in subject 11
Know author 22	Recom. by another 11	Recom. by another 22	Recom. by another 10	Know author 1
Recom. by another 21	Know author 5	Know author 15	Know author 10	Recom. by another 0

SUMMARY

Interest in subject	348
Recommendation by another	128
Read books by same author	107

Conclusions - Table F:

1. From the data in this table, it is easy to see that junior high students read principally because of their interest in a particular subject, which is an expected reaction.

2. Recommendation by another person may be due to peer influence, teacher influence or librarian influence. This could be an area where teachers and librarians can be more active and influential in reading guidance.

3. Reading other books by popular authors does not show up as a strong influence in helping junior high students decide to read, yet personal experience and observation as a junior high school librarian indicate that this factor is more important than it appears on this survey.

TABLE G

Characteristics of stories

6th		7th		8th	
Love	56	Scary incid.	49	Excitement	67
Scary incid	53	Suspense	43	Suspense	49
Excitement	53	Action	37	Action	44
Surprise	51	Humor	34	Love	41
Action	32	Excitement	34	Humor	29
Humor	28	Love	30	Surprise	29
Ridiculous	19	Surprise	23	Scary incid	29
Suspense	8	Ridiculous	17	Ridiculous	17

Boys		Girls	
Excitement	88	Excitement	96
Action	84	Love	87
Scary incid	63	Scary incid	68
Humor	48	Surprise	64
Suspense	44	Suspense	56
Surprise	40	Humor	43
Love	40	Action	29
Ridiculous	17	Ridiculous	25

White		Black	
Excitement	109	Excitement	75
Scary incid	104	Surprise	48
Love	95	Love	47
Action	88	Scary incid	27
Suspense	85	Action	25
Humor	83	Humor	18
Surprise	55	Suspense	15
Ridiculous	36	Ridiculous	6

A-B		C-D		E	
Scary incid	91	Excitement	79	Excitement	16
Excitement	90	Surprise	40	Surprise	15
Love	83	Love	32	Action	13
Action	78	Scary incid	29	Love	12
Humor	67	Suspense	27	Scary incid	11
Suspense	63	Humor	24	Suspense	11
Surprise	52	Action	22	Humor	3
Ridiculous	31	Ridiculous	11	Ridiculous	0

SUMMARY

Excitement	707
Love, romance	553
Scary incidents	524
Plenty of action	452
Surprise	416
Suspense	401
Humorous incidents	377
Ridiculous incidents	168

Conclusions - Table G:

1. The overall responses indicate excitement, love, scary incidents, action, and surprise as being prime ingredients for stories that appeal to junior high school students.

2. The suspense and action preferences of seventh graders may replace the single factor of excitement. Several terms, such as excitement, action, suspense, and surprise, overlap in meaning and the students probably did not differentiate very keenly between them.

3. Girls' choice of excitement over love is a bit surprising, but the low rating of love in the boys' preferences is not.

4. There is a general tendency of agreement between white and black students in their preferences.

5. Considering the first four choices of above average, average, and below average students, we note that excitement, surprise, and action are dominant factors, with love and scary incidents as necessary ingredients in stories.

6. In this table, as in other tables, consideration should also be given to some of the factors rated low on these lists. Note should be taken and a relevancy established concerning some of the less preferred, but nonetheless preferred, factors.

TABLE H

Sex of characters

6th		7th		8th		Boys		Girls	
M & F	35	M & F	26	M & F	30	M & F	39	M & F	52
Female	7	M or F	15	M or F	17	M or F	17	M or F	19
Male	4	Male	5	Male	1	Male	8	Female	5
M or F	4	Female	4	Female	1	Female	7	Male	2

White		Black		A-B		C-D		E	
M & F	65	M & F	26	M & F	64	M & F	21	M & F	6
M or F	24	M or F	12	M or F	16	M or F	16	M or F	4
Male	9	Female	5	Male	7	Female	5	Female	2
Female	7	Male	1	Female	5	Male	2	Male	1

SUMMARY

Male and female	284
Male or female	145
Female	48
Male	40

Conclusions - Table H:

1. This table illustrates the obvious, the normal, the expected.

2. The fact that some students mention male only or female only should be given some consideration in book selection.

TABLE I

What junior high students like to read about

6th		7th		8th	
Fairy tales	74	Nature	54	History	55
Home & school	56	Home & school	47	Nature	51
Nature	31	Biography	46	Wld/Nat. Prob.	43
Poetry	27	History	42	Biography	37
Science	26	Invention	39	Home & school	35
History	23	Wld/Nat. Prob.	25	Fairy tales	25
Wld/Nat. Prob.	22	Fairy tales	17	Invention	23
Biography	20	Poetry	16	Science	20
Invention	19	Science	12	Poetry	7

Boys		Girls	
History	84	Home & school	114
Nature	74	Fairy tales	72
Biography	53	Nature	56
Invention	53	Biography	50
Wld/Nat. Prob.	44	Wld/Nat. Prob.	46
Science	36	History	36
Fairy tales	34	Poetry	36
Home & school	24	Invention	28
Poetry	14	Science	20

White		Black	
Nature	105	Home & school	55
History	91	Fairy tales	46
Home & school	83	History	29
Biography	76	Biography	27
Wld/Nat. Prob.	71	Nature	25
Fairy tales	70	Invention	22
Invention	59	Poetry	22
Science	37	Science	19
Poetry	28	Wld/Nat. Prob.	19

A-B		C-D		E	
Home & school	88	Nature	41	Fairy tales	12
Nature	83	Home & school	40	Wld/Nat. Prob.	11
Biography	71	Fairy tales	36	Science	11
History	70	History	32	History	11
Fairy tales	68	Biography	26	Home & school	10
Wld/Nat. Prob.	60	Invention	23	Poetry	6
Invention	53	Science	21	Biography	6
Poetry	29	Poetry	15	Nature	6
Science	24	Wld/Nat. Prob.	13	Invention	5

SUMMARY

Home and school	552
Nature	526
History	473
Fairy tales	442
Biography	410
World/National Problems	354
Invention	325
Science	226
Poetry	200

This table lists areas of reading interests different from those on Table C (Kinds of books junior high students like to read) and Table E (What junior high students want to read about). The choices listed in Table I are more conservative and academic than they are current and controversial. Table I expands the choices of reading interests and also widens the librarian's spectrum of book selection.

Conclusions - Table I:

1. Sixth graders' first choice of fairy tales is probably a carry-over from their elementary school days. Seventh graders' first choice of nature might indicate their expanding inquisitiveness. Eighth graders' first choice of history might reflect the pressures or influences of social studies or history classes.

2. The overall choices of home and school, nature, and history reflect the influences of the worlds junior high students associate with: home, school, and the world around them.

3. Boys generally disagree with girls as shown by the girls' first choice of home and school, and the boys rating this factor quite low. The boys' first choice of history may be surprising in light of their traditional interest in science and invention.

4. Whites generally disagree with blacks in this question, although there is some proximity of choices, such as history and biography.

5. The above average and average students show a definite agreement in preferences, while the below average students generally have their particular, separate preferences.

TABLE J

Favorite school subjects

6th		7th		8th	
Art	36	P.E.C.E.*	29	Soc. Studies	48
Reading	30	For. Lang.	19	Science	17
Science	28	Home Ec.	19	Home Ec.	17
Soc. Stud.	26	Art	18	Math	15
Math	11	Music	17	Art	13
Music	5	Shop	12	Music	13
Shop	5	Math	10	For. Lang.	13
		Soc. Studies	10		

* P.E.C.E. = Program of education and career exploration.

- this course is offered only in the seventh grade.

The Foreign Language is Spanish.

SUMMARY

Social Studies	84
Art	67
Science	46
Reading	38
Home Economics	38
Math	36
Music	35
P.E.C.E.	34
Foreign Language	32
Shop	19
English	11

Conclusions - Table J:

There seems to be no significant relationship between favorite subjects and reading interests. The results of this question may reflect teacher appeal more than subject appeal. Some significance may exist in eighth graders' choice of Social Studies as their favorite subject and History in Table I (What junior high students like to read about) as their favorite reading interest.

TABLE K

Favorite titles and authors

	TITLES	AUTHORS
Sixth Grade:	Little house on the prairie (5) Farmer boy (4) Mary Ellis, student nurse (4) Homer Price (4) Sister of the bride (4) Huckleberry Finn (3) Charlotte's web (3) Boxcar children (3) Bride wore braids (3) Helen Keller (3) Seventeenth summer (2) Tom Sawyer (2) Surprise Island (2) - 73 other titles listed	Beverly Cleary (7) Mark Twain (6) E.B. White (4) Laura Ingalls Wilder (3) Alfred Hitchcock (2) Hope Newell (2) Scott O'Dell Phyllis Whitney Keith Robertson Arnold Elliott - 15 others mentioned
Seventh Grade:	Tom Sawyer (7) Love Story (6) Year of Janie's diary (5) Charlotte's web (5) Incredible journey (5) 20,000 leagues under the sea (3) Flowers for Algernon (3) Wrinkle in time (2) Johnny Reb (2) Treasure Island (2) My friend Flicka (2) Huckleberry Finn (2) Gone with the wind (2) Miss Pickerel series (3) - 117 other titles listed	Mark Twain (8) Erich Segal (5) Robert L. Stevenson (5) Beverly Cleary (4) Margaret Mitchell (4) E.B. White (4) Alfred Hitchcock (3) Carolyn Keene (3) Laura Ingalls Wilder (2) Edgar Allan Poe (2) Louisa May Alcott (2) C.W. Anderson (2) William Shakespeare (2) Jules Verne (2) - 34 others mentioned
Eighth Grade:	Martin Luther King, Jr. (4) The Pearl (3) Call of the wild (3) The God machine (3) Tell me you love me, Junie Moon (3) Love story (3) Swiss Family Robinson (2) Tom Sawyer (2) Little Women (2) Sister of the bride (2) Dan'l Boone (2) Black Stallion (2) Late for Boston (2) Peanuts (2) - 94 other titles listed	Mark Twain (7) Charles Dickens (4) William Steele (4) Beverly Cleary (3) John Steinbeck (3) Jack London (3) Martin Caidin (2) Walter Farley (2) Edgar Allan Poe (2) Erich Segal (2) Edwin Gordon (2) Catherine Peare (2) - 26 others mentioned

The preceding list of titles and authors does not present an accurate picture of reading interests. Less than 60% of the students listed any titles or authors, and fewer than 15% listed five authors and five titles. However, the titles and authors are listed here to give an indication of what is more or less of current reading interest to junior high students. Many of the titles and authors reflect the types of stories junior high students indicate they prefer. Not all responses are listed. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of times a particular title or author was listed. No number after an author indicates that name was listed only once.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

1. There is a difference in the first preferences of sixth, seventh, and eighth graders in their reading interests. All grades chose mystery-detective stories. The next four choices differ generally in position, but indicate a general agreement in reading interests.
2. Boys differ noticeably from girls in their first choice of reading interests; boys naturally choose sports stories, and girls choose mystery-detective stories first. Girls rank romance second, while boys rank this factor quite low. Boys list sexy stories second on Table E, indicating they differentiate between sex and love. The next four choices also indicate a general agreement in reading interests.
3. White and black students agree in their first choice of reading interests and generally agree in the next four or five areas of interest.
4. Above average and average students both selected mystery-detective stories as their first choice; below average students list mystery-detective stories a close second behind sports stories.
5. The primary factors influencing junior high students to read are magazines and television movies and programs. We can see in this information an area where teachers and librarians can exert influence and guidance toward some

of the better, classical programs and movies on television, and in acquiring current magazines of interest to junior high students.

6. Junior high students are in tune with the world, as shown by their desire to read sexy stories, and to read about drugs and drug addiction, sports, crime, and early marriages. This information presents very formidable and influential areas for librarians to acquire books dealing with these current ideas and contemporary happenings which captivate the minds of junior high students...books which treat some of these controversial and delicate subjects in healthy, straightforward, informative ways, not blatantly or unrealistically.
7. Conservatively, junior high students prefer stories about nature, home and school, history, fairy tales, and biography. These appeal to their romantic, imaginative and inquisitive natures. Book selection and reading guidance could be key factors in influencing and directing the reading of junior high students in these conservative areas as well as in contemporary, controversial, current affairs.
8. Junior high school students spend more time reading for personal enjoyment than for class assignments. On the average, a junior high student spends about three to five hours each week reading for enjoyment and for class assignments. Reading speeds and reading comprehension of individual students would affect the efficiency of a three-to-five-hour period of reading.
9. The listing of titles and authors follows the trend of reading surveys: students read what is currently of interest, with a base of some classical writers. Students could not generally remember authors; they remember stories better than titles, judging from their questions concerning books and stories.

The applications of the data found in this survey are left tp to individuals interested in young people and reading. Some applications are implied in this report, but specific directions are left up to individuals and individual situations.

Marjorie Sullivan says, "Building the young adult collection, we look for quality of text and format as well as appeal, level of difficulty, and developmental and curricular uses. Of these, it is appeal which whisks the book from the shelf."[3] While a book may be appealing, it may also help the individual to grow in knowledge, to mature in spirit, and to develop self-motivating ambitions. In book selection, we should "be guided not so much by our assessment of a book's literary worth, as by our assessment of its relevance to the reader's situation and his needs."[4] Book selection and reading guidance can not be fully learned in schools of education, but they can be learned more practically right in a school library or a school classroom or a school playground where teachers, librarians and students meet on common grounds and mingle freely with free exchange of ideas.

This survey has endeavored to discover some of the things which appeal to teenagers, to establish some of their needs, and to determine the structures which make up their world. We hope that this survey helps librarians and teachers in supplying reading materials of interest and value to the students they serve and in guiding and directing the reading of these students.

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3 Marjorie Sullivan. "Books, readers, and individuals," Top of the News, April, 1971, p. 297.

4 Ivor J. Leng. Children in the library. Cardiff: University of Wales Press. 1968, p. 180.

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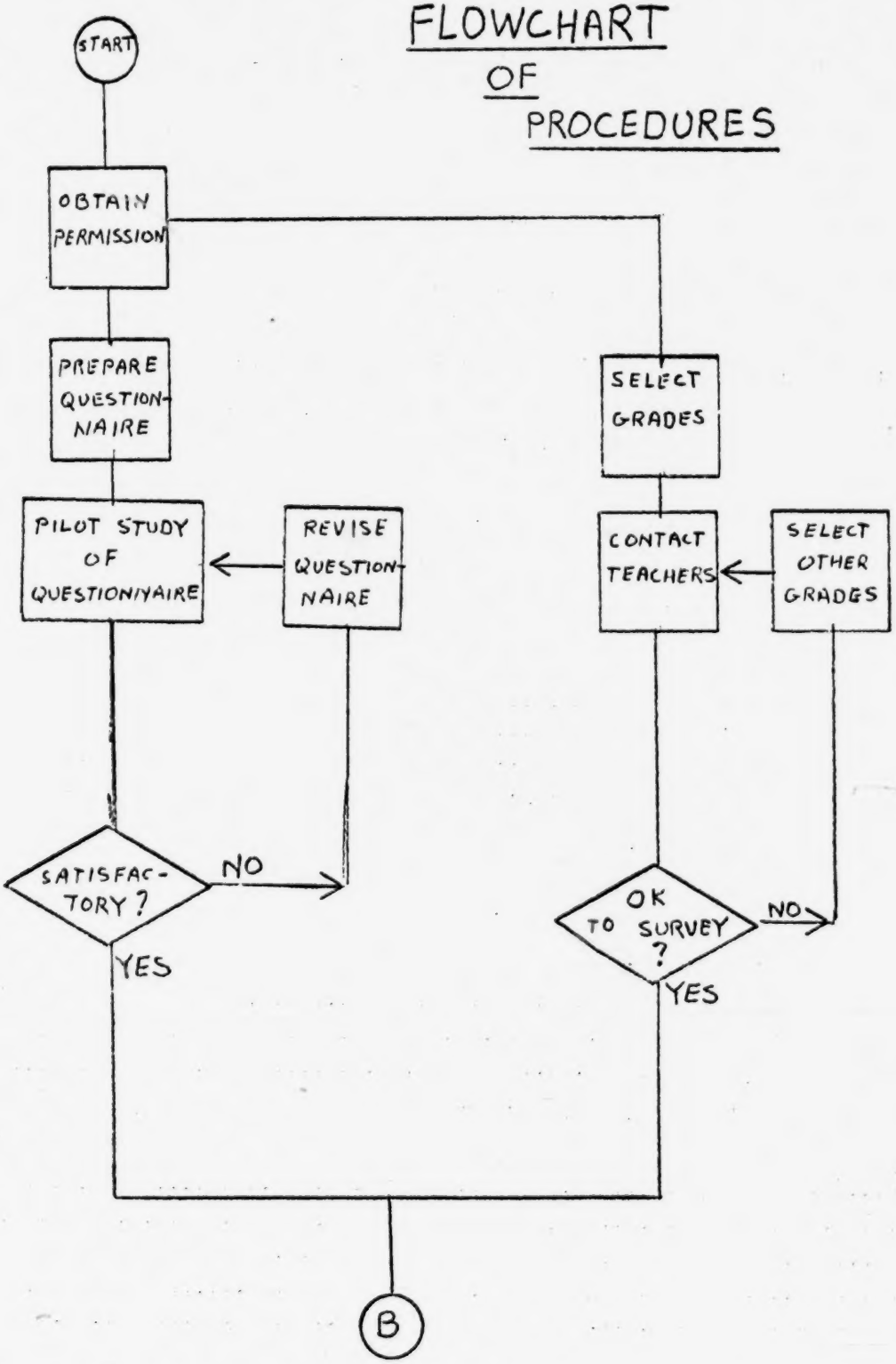
FLOWCHART OF PROCEDURES



B
ADMINISTER QUESTIONNAIRE
KEYPUNCH DATA
FEED INTO COMPUTER (IBM 7094)
PRODUCE PRINT-OUTS
CONCLUSIONS — REPORTING
STOP

SURVEY OF READING INTERESTS

NO. (1-2)

This questionnaire is part of a study being conducted at Marietta Junior High School concerning the reading interests of junior high school students. Your answers will help us in deciding the kinds of books to buy for the school library.

This is not a test. Answer exactly as you feel. There are no right or wrong answers. Most of the questions can be answered by a check or a number. All the information you give is confidential.

EXAMPLE: Which of the following foods do you like best? Indicate your preference by writing:

1 in front of your first choice
2 in front of your second choice
3 in front of your third choice

Choose THREE only:

..... hot dogs	..... hamburgers
..... "sloppy Joe"	..... pizza
..... meat loaf	..... fried chicken
..... turkey salad	..... ham

* * * *

4. How much time, on the average, do you spend each week reading for your own enjoyment? Check one: (12)

..... less than 1 hour a week (1)
..... 1 - 2 hours a week (2)
..... 3 - 5 hours a week (3)
..... 6 - 10 hours a week (4)
..... more than 10 hours a week (5)

5. What kinds of books do you like to read? Indicate your preference of the following kinds of stories by writing:

1 in front of your first choice
2 in front of your second choice
3 in front of your third choice
4 in front of your fourth choice
5 in front of your fifth choice

Choose FIVE only. READ THE WHOLE LIST FIRST BEFORE YOU CHOOSE:

..... detective & mystery stories (13)
..... humorous stories (14)
..... sports stories (15)
..... westerns (16)
..... animal stories (17)
..... romance, love stories (18)
..... science fiction (19)
..... adventure (20)
..... biography (books about real people) (21)

6. Which of the following has made you want to read? Check one: (22)

..... television programs (not including movies) (1)
..... television movies (2)
..... radio programs (3)
..... movies (not including TV movies) (4)
..... magazines (5)

7. Which of the following topics do you read about, or want to read about, most? Indicate your preference by writing:

1 in front of your first choice
2 in front of your second choice
3 in front of your third choice

Choose THREE only:

..... crime (23)
..... drug addiction (24)
..... sexy stories (25)
..... stories about Vietnam (26)
..... broken homes (27)
..... early marriages (28)
..... stories about Negroes (29)
..... sports (30)

8. Which of the following do you like to read about most? Indicate your preference by writing:

1 in front of your first choice
2 in front of your second choice
3 in front of your third choice

Choose THREE only:

..... home and school (31)
..... fairy tales (32)
..... science (33)
..... biography (34)
..... world or national problems (35)
..... nature (36)
..... invention (37)
..... history (38)
..... poetry (39)

9. (40) Which of the following helps you to decide to read a book? Check one:

..... interest in the subject (1)
..... recommendation by another person (2)
..... liked other books by the same author (3)

10. Which of the following characteristics of books do you like most? Indicate your preference by writing:

1 in front of your first choice
2 in front of your second choice
3 in front of your third choice

Choose THREE only:

..... excitement (41)
..... surprise (42)
..... scary incidents (43)
..... ridiculous incidents (44)
..... suspense (45)
..... plenty of action (46)
..... love themes (47)
..... humorous incidents (48)

11. (49) What do you like the characters of books to be? Check one:

..... male only (1)
..... female only (2)
..... male and female (3)
..... either male or female (4)

12. In the space below, name your three favorite authors:

1.....
2.....
3.....

13. In the space below, write the titles (and authors, if you remember) of the five books you liked best:

	TITLE	AUTHOR (if you remember)
1.	.....	.....
2.	.....	.....
3.	.....	.....
4.	.....	.....
5.	.....	.....

Numbers in blue and in parentheses identify items in a choice.
Numbers in red refer to columns on punched cards.
↓
circled